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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 DOHA 000180

SIPDIS

FOR ADMIRAL ERIC OLSON FROM AMBASSADOR LEBARON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ADMIRAL OLSON'S MARCH 15-16 VISIT
TO QATAR

REF: A. DOHA 56

[1](#)B. DOHA 54

[1](#)C. DOHA 45

Classified By: Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Admiral Olson, Embassy Doha welcomes your visit to Qatar. I personally very much look forward to seeing you again and to joining you for meetings with the Qatari leadership. You are the highest ranking military officer to visit Qatar since General David Petraeus visited February 13-16.

[1](#)2. (SBU) We have requested the following meetings for the morning of March 16:

-- The Crown Prince, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who has overall responsibility for Qatar's military and security services;

-- The Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Major General Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyeh .

[1](#)3. (C) Meeting times will become clearer as your visit draws near. I am also planning a dinner for you as the guest of honor. I am optimistic that not only MG Al-Attiyeh , but also Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser Al-Thani, who serves as both de facto Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (ISF), will attend. If they do, this will be a singular opportunity to discuss the Special Operations relationship with Qatar.

[1](#)4. (C) Relationship-building is clearly a major objective for your visit. But I want to accomplish even more: to advance our training and cooperation both with the Qatar Armed Forces and the ISF, and Special Operations cooperation is an ideal vehicle for that. A meeting with the Crown Prince may also be an opportunity to help improve the troubled U.S.-Qatar political relationship.

[1](#)5. (C) Below are four sections of information that, in their entirety, present the Country Team's views on how your visit can best advance the U.S. Government's strategic objectives in Qatar. We start with a brief review of the bilateral relationship, then we discuss several key trends through 2011 that the U.S. Mission has identified. Finally, we provide our analysis on how to advance our military engagement with Qatar, including talking points for your meetings with Qatari officials. Warm regards, Joseph LeBaron, Ambassador

THE U.S.-QATAR RELATIONSHIP

16. (C) The breadth and depth of Qatar's relationship with the U.S. is impressive, especially for a small country of only 1.7 million inhabitants, of whom only about 225,000 are actually Qatari citizens.

-- (C) The U.S.-Qatar military relationship is, of course, extremely important. Qatar provides the U.S. military exceptional access to two major Qatari military installations, Al Udaid Airbase and Camp As-Sayliah)- perhaps SOCOM's and SOCCENT's most important operating installations in the Middle East outside of military use.

-- (C) Until recently, the U.S. had never made a major defense sale to Qatar. In July 2008 Qatar signed contracts with Boeing for two C-17s with an option for two more, and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js also with an option for two more. The C-17 and C-130 sales are a signal Qatar is beginning to invest in its own defensive capabilities)- with a preference for U.S.-origin equipment -- expressing interest in many other systems, most notably integrated air defense.

-- (U) The broader economic relationship between Qatar and the United States is vital. U.S. energy companies have invested tens of billions of dollars in the oil and gas industry here. Qatar, which holds the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Iran and Russia, is expected to become in 2009 one of the most important suppliers of imported liquefied natural gas to the U.S.

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-- (U) Because it is so small and its energy resources so large, Qatar now has an annual per capita income of over \$60,000. Even with the current global financial crisis, Qatar's national revenues continue to grow, and Qatar now has, according to the IMF, the highest per capita income in the world.

-- (U) Vast wealth has bolstered political ambitions, leading to Qatari foreign policy initiatives that are often at odds with U.S. objectives, notably Qatar's relationships with Hamas and Syria. One exception is Qatar's initiative on Darfur, which has U.S. support. Qatar, working with UN and African Union Mediator Djibril Bassole, aims to reduce the gaps between rival Sudanese factions with the eventual goal of convening a peace conference in Doha that would bring an end to the misery in Darfur.

-- (U) Qatar's location, wide-ranging foreign relations, fast-growing economy, and expanding transportation links have made counterterrorism cooperation, including counterterrorist financing, a key aspect of our relationship. Qatar's wealth, in particular, means its citizens are potential sources of money for violent extremists and cooperative efforts to target and prevent these financial flows are central to our bilateral agenda.

-- (U) Qatar has committed itself like few other Arab states to modernizing its educational system, and has turned decisively to the United States for help. Qatar has imported branch campuses of six U.S. universities, including Texas A&M, Carnegie-Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical School, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth, and Northwestern. It is instituting a U.S. model of charter schools at the elementary and secondary levels.

THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: KEY TRENDS THROUGH 2011

17. (S) Following are the key trends over the next three years that we believe will have the greatest impact on our military relationship:

-- (C) Qatar will continue to modernize its military through the purchase of U.S. weapons systems, though competition will continue from the French, British, and others. Despite Qatar's wealth, defense purchases will be made in the context of a frugal military budget, made worse by the global economic crisis. Economic development will remain Qatar's top spending priority and we have already heard signals that military purchases will be on a slower track.

-- (U) Qatar will continue to face a formidable challenge staffing its military with Qataris because there are so few of them, and because more attractive opportunities exist elsewhere in the government and the private sector. The continued dependence on foreign nationals, particularly in the enlisted ranks, will continue to present concerns about transfers of sensitive U.S. technology.

-- (U) Qatari leadership will seek to increase the prestige of its military within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the international arena but has no clearly defined strategy for doing so. Likewise, Qatar is attracted to the latest military systems, even while its military modernization is not guided by a national security strategy, at least not one we're aware of.

-- (U) Irritating customs and immigration issues stemming from Qatar's need to demonstrate sovereignty over Al Udaid Airbase will continue to plague the mil-mil relationship for some time to come, although the Crown Prince, Sheikh Tamim, and the Qatar Armed Force Chief of Staff, Major General Al-Attiyeh, in February pledged to work with U.S. counterparts to put in place reliable procedures and enforce them.

-- (C) We expect that the biggest factor in our engagement in the near-term will be Qatar's sensitivity to the large, enduring U.S. military presence. While Qatar's leadership regards our presence as a permanent and necessary deterrent to the aggression of surrounding states, principally Iran and Saudi Arabia, it does expose it to regional criticism and,

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potentially, to terrorist attack.

-- (C) We expect, therefore, that Qatar will continue to pursue a policy of strengthening and deepening the military relationship through increased combined planning, training, exercises, and operations -- along the lines of the relationship that exists between the U.S. Forces in Korea and the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENT: SUGGESTED POINTS FOR OUR DINNER

18. (C) Your visit provides a unique opportunity to deepen our strategic, operational and tactical cooperation with the Government of Qatar. Your visit also provides us with an opportunity that is rare -- an intimate dinner between MG Al-Attiyeh and Sheikh Abdulla. There will be no more than 10 at the dinner, including four on the Qatari side. Although the Qatar Armed Forces has a special operations unit, the best funded and best resourced special operations unit resides within the ISF, which Sheikh Abdulla commands. Here's how our dinner on Sunday night at my residence can best move forward U.S. efforts on this front:

19. (S) PROMOTE COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES: As this is the only time you will see Sheikh Abdulla of the Ministry of Interior on your visit, we think it is important that you stress a few key points:

-- (S) You should note that through SOCCENT J3, teams from 5th Special Forces Group performed a JCET with the ISF in February and had high praise for the level of competency and

professionalism of their ISF counterparts. (JCET included advanced marksmanship, close quarters battle instruction, basic medical instruction, long range interdiction, fast rope insertions, mounted and maritime infiltration with assets organic to the ISF, specifically the SWAT element.) You might also add that the teams coming out for a second JCET in April are looking forward to another opportunity to train with the ISF.

-- (S) You should, if you agree, be prepared to explore with both Chief of Staff Al-Attiyeh and with Sheikh Abdulla of the Ministry of Interior ways to expand the Special Operations relationship with Qatar. The expanded relationship could include both the ISF of the Ministry of Interior and the separate entity of the Qatar Armed Forces. (As you might expect, there is some rivalry between these two Qatari security and defense elements.) A Special Operations expanded relationship could involve, for example, police training and more FID programs, including critical infrastructure protection training and assistance, as described immediately below.

10. (S) PROTECTION OF CRITICAL ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE:

-- (S) Security of Qatar's oil and natural gas infrastructure, especially the North Field off the northern tip of the country, and the on-shore gas liquefaction facilities at Ras Laffan are of high interest to the U.S. We recommend you solicit Qatari views on their plans for security of this critical national asset and explore ways that Special Operators might assist. Recent USDAO reporting outlines a picture of little capability in defending Qatar's economic well-being. Armed smuggling, piracy, and potential terrorist activity in the North Field would be felt around the world.

-- (S) You should mention that maritime security around Ras Laffan, Halul Islands, and the North Field should be an important agenda item for the Qataris at the April 2009 Military Consultative Committee (MCC). Because we assess cooperation between the Qatar Armed Forces and the Interior Ministry to be poor, we should look for opportunities to encourage greater Qatari interagency coordination as well as to discuss energy infrastructure security with key USG officials.

11. (S) DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY:

-- (S) We have long believed that Qatar lacks an overarching national military strategy. During GEN Petraeus' visit last month, MG Al-Attiyeh said they had developed one, but we

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have never seen it and have no way to judge its quality or sophistication. GEN Petraeus offered CENTCOM assistance in development of such a strategy, something the Crown Prince accepted. (Qatari military officials were less enthusiastic.) GEN Petraeus assigned coordination with Qatar to his J-5 planners.

-- (S) You should reference GEN Petraeus' discussion with the Crown Prince and note that a small team from CENTCOM J5 would like to travel to Qatar at the end of March to begin discussions on the way-ahead in preparing a national military strategy. You might add that SOCOM and SOCCENT are willing to assist in any way possible to ensure the success of this planning effort.

SUGGESTED POINTS FOR THE CROWN PRINCE

12. (C) Most major military decisions, especially those that affect both the Qatar Armed Forces and the Internal Security Force, are made by Sheikh Tamim and his father, the Amir. Major weapons sales and interagency coordination among the

various arms of Qatar's security apparatus fall within Sheikh Tamim's portfolio. To that end you will want to reiterate not only the many points mentioned above at the dinner, but also the following:

-- (C) Describe briefly for Sheikh Tamim your role within the Department of Defense, and the contribution special operators make to our strategic objectives in the region.

-- (C) Acknowledge that you understand the proprietary nature of the Qatar Armed Forces and the Internal Security Force as it pertains to special operations, but you believe that there are many benefits to be realized with a closer working relationship between the two entities. Perhaps in the near future both government agencies can train together with U.S. forces to foster closer ties.

-- (C) Note Qatar's desire to develop expertise in international humanitarian missions. In addition to deployment of Qatari forces in Africa, they have also served in Lebanon and most recently (January/February) sent a team to Sinai for three weeks to assist -- unsuccessfully, it turns out -- with the humanitarian effort in Gaza.

-- (C) As stated earlier, a team from CENTCOM is prepared to visit Qatar at the end of the month to begin working with the Qataris in developing a national military strategy.

LeBaron